

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Elementary and Middle School Norm-Referenced Tests

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.6453, 703 KAR 5:020

History/Background:

Existing Policy. The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has established the goal of proficiency for all Kentucky schools by 2014. The accountability system provides a metric for measuring progress toward the long-term proficiency goal that is described for a school as a Kentucky Accountability Index of 100. The Accountability Index includes both academic content-based and non-academic measures. The academic content measures are reported in an Academic Index based on student performance on custom, criterion-referenced Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and humanities, practical living/vocational studies and writing. Each KCCT Academic Index is generated from the percentages of students scoring at each performance or achievement standard—Novice, Apprentice, Proficient and Distinguished. Also reported from 1999-2006 as an academic measure were the results of a nationally norm-referenced test in mathematics and reading at grades 3, 6 and 9. The norm-referenced test results were included as five percent (5%) of a school's accountability calculation. Non-academic measures reported include attendance, retention, dropout and transition to adult life rates.

When the Kentucky Board of Education gave final approval to 703 KAR 5:020 in February 2007, the revised regulation required that norm-referenced tests at elementary and middle schools be administered and reported but the results would not be included in the calculations of the accountability index. Elementary schools were permitted the flexibility to choose a norm-referenced test approved by the Kentucky Department of Education to be administered in reading and mathematics once during elementary school with results reported publicly and discussed with parents. At middle school, EXPLORE was designated to be administered at grade 8, reported publicly and with parents, and used in the development of a student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

The Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS) has brought to the Board's attention that its interpretation of the statutes related to this matter is that a single, uniform elementary norm-referenced test should be required and results included in the elementary accountability formula. At middle school, EAARS indicated that the Board should inquire about reserving a form of EXPLORE for Kentucky and the subcommittee communicated that EXPLORE results should be included in middle school accountability.

At the June KBE meeting, department staff and the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council recommended implementing EAARS' interpretation at the beginning of the next biennium in order to keep the rules the same for the two-year testing cycle, allow time to secure a test vendor and identify the assessment to be required, and permit the state to choose the testing window for administration of the elementary NRT. Staff recommended the following by school year as designated below.

School Year 2007-2008

- Exercise flexibility in choice of elementary NRT administration.
- Administer EXPLORE to 8th grade students.
- Report NRT and EXPLORE results publicly, discuss individual results with parents, and use results in the development of Individual Learning Plans (ILP).
- Do not include NRT and EXPLORE results in accountability.
- Release a Request for Proposals (RFP) and negotiate a contract for a uniform single NRT.
- Secure a reserved form of EXPLORE for state administration.

School Year 2008-2009

- Administer uniform single NRT at the elementary school.
- Include elementary NRT and EXPLORE results in accountability.

The KBE indicated that they strongly encourage schools in 2007-2008 to use the same elementary NRT as the prior year for comparison of performance across the two years.

During the 2006-2007 school year, schools were challenged to implement changes in the assessment and accountability system partially due to the short timeframe following final approval of the 703 KAR 5:020 in February. As we move closer to 2014 it becomes increasingly important for schools to thoroughly understand the requirements of the system and have adequate time to implement changes so they may focus their efforts on ensuring every child is proficient and prepared for success.

Direction from the KBE on four specific issues is needed at the August meeting to structure the release of the RFP to secure a vendor for a single uniform elementary NRT and to revise 703 KAR 5:020 on the inclusion of the elementary NRT and middle school EXPLORE results into school accountability. Staff needs guidance on:

1. In what elementary grade should the single uniform elementary NRT be administered?

2. At what time in the school year should the single uniform elementary NRT be administered?
3. What portion of the school accountability formula at elementary and middle schools should be derived from the elementary NRT and middle school EXPLORE results?
4. Which current content area weights should be reduced and by what amount to allow for the inclusion of the elementary NRT and middle school EXPLORE results in the accountability formula?

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

Staff will discuss these issues with District Assessment Coordinators, the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council, and the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee. At the August KBE meeting, staff will report on the interactions with these stakeholders and make a recommendation on the specific issues.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Holding schools accountable for progress is a key element in meeting proficiency by 2014.

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